



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 7:1-25

“The Greatest Political Power in Israel Since David”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father we come to Thee in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we ask that Thy blessing may be upon the ministry of Thy word in this meeting. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the privilege of reading the prophecies that were given to men of God so many hundreds of years ago such as Isaiah and the other prophets. And we thank Thee for the courage and the faithfulness of this great group of men who were known as my servants the prophets. And we pray Lord that in the day in which we live we may manifest some of the same trust and confidence in Thee to which they called the people of their day.

We thank Thee for the message that is before us tonight as we consider the appeal of Isaiah to King Ahaz to give his heart and trust to the Lord God rather than to the Assyrians or the Egyptians or any other human power. And Father, we pray for each one of us that the lessons that we may discern as we read and study this ancient chapter may be lessons that we learn and apply in the lives that Thou hast given us to live in our day. May the great truths that the prophet wrote about in the eighth century before the time of Christ be fulfilled in us in nineteen hundred and eighty-four. And now we ask Thy blessing upon us in this hour and may Lord the experience of each of us be that it has been good to listen to Thy word when we finish our pondering of the message of Isaiah

chapter 7. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ of whom that prophet wrote so many hundreds of years before he came. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are turning in our study of the Messianic Prophecies of Isaiah to the 7th chapter of the Book of Isaiah in which is contained of course the famous prophecy of the virgin birth of the Son that is to come. Now as we have been thinking a bit about the Prophet Isaiah and while it is true we have passed over some chapters already in our study, one can sense as he reads these chapters and particularly chapter 3 and chapter 5 that the Prophet Isaiah is an analyzer of the inner morals of the society of Judah and Israel in his day. And perhaps no one has been able better to analyze the state of the morals of any people than Isaiah and the other prophets of their day, because they were given insight by God into what was really troubling the heart of the Nation Israel and the country of Judah.

Well in the 7th chapter of the Book of Isaiah we introduce to the Prophet Isaiah as what one of the finest students of Isaiah said many years ago, “The greatest political power in Israel since David.” Now that seems a striking thing to say, that Isaiah is the greatest political power in Israel since David. The reason that Isaiah became such a political power in addition to being such a magnificent perceiver of Israel’s spiritual condition was because of the times in which he lived. The world was becoming smaller and smaller. Now of course, we in our day when the world has become really small, might not realize that that same principle pertained in the day in which Isaiah wrote, but the world was becoming smaller and smaller. And then of course, the reason that Isaiah became the greatest political power in Israel since David is because there was lodged in him such a magnificent faith in the Lord God. He saw Jehovah as the Lord of lords and King of kings and so consequently, he did become a tremendous political force in the land.

When one thinks of the days of Isaiah, it's helpful to remember who were the powers and who were not. The two great powers of Isaiah's day, particularly at the time in which he writes, was the power of the Assyrian empire on the north, and the Egyptian empire on the south. Now these two great empires, Assyria on the north, and Egypt on the south were the powers with which Israel and Judah had to contend. But they had troubles themselves. Assyria's troubles came primarily from Babylonia. At one time, the Assyrians had been the slaves of the Babylonians, but at this time, it was the Assyrians who were in the ascendancy and Babylonia was not. But they nevertheless were constantly troubled by Babylon. And then, when one thinks of Egypt, they too had their difficulties because the northern Egyptians were troubled by the southern powers, or the upper Egyptians by the lower, lower by the upper. Ethiopia was the problem of Egypt, and as a matter of fact, during this time, Egypt very rarely ever went out beyond its own borders in an attempt to have an influence on other countries. But nevertheless, in spite of that, it was the second of the great world empires and therefore in Isaiah you will see reference over and over again to Assyria and Babylon and Egypt and Ethiopia.

And then Isaiah lived in the day in which Israel was a divided empire, the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel had on its border the kingdom of Syria, not Assyria, but Syria. And then Judah in the south, and gathered around Judah were some of the other smaller countries. The Assyrians of course were the ones with whom Isaiah particularly had to contend, and they under Tiglath-Pileser were a ferocious enemy of many of the peoples of their day. They were noted for their ferocity and their cruelty and the ways in which they subjugated the peoples that they came in contact with. And then they were noted also for the gods that they worshipped, for they worshipped many of them. And unfortunately, those who were in the country of Judah as well as in Syria were influenced by them.

For example, take King Ahaz about whom we're going to read in just a moment. Ahaz was so impressed by the Assyrians that he himself decide at one point that he

wanted to worship their gods, because their gods did such great things for them and he felt that his God was not doing anything for him. We read for example in 2 Chronicles chapter 28, “For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him and he said because the gods of King of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and all Israel the writer of the Book of Chronicles says. So what we have then is conflict between Assyria and Egypt and then over against them stand the strength and originality of the prophets of Israel. It looks like it’s an uneven battle, all of the great nations and even their own nation, standing against them. But remember, the prophets had the Lord God with them and so having the Lord God with them in the final analysis; it is the prophets who overcome and the nations who ultimately pass off into limbo.

Many years ago, Gibbon who wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* said, “The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrates as equally useful.” You know, that’s a magnificent statement, that’s a magnificent statement because such perceptive analysis of the conditions let me read it again, “The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrates as equally useful.” Now you look back and you say, “well, that was probably true of them alright, we’ll acknowledge, Gibbon, you may be right.” But have you ever thought about the twentieth century, characteristics things of the twentieth century as the fact that the world considers all religion and all of the religions as equally true. Have you ever noticed that? The idea that a person should so arrogant as to suggest that one religion is true and the others are false, is something that our society can not possibly stand. That is the prevailing view; it appears on the lips of all thinking people, speaking generally of course, in our western world, and in the eastern world as well.

But it doesn't stop there. Gibbon was right on his second point also, by the philosophers as equally false. Because if you will study modern philosophy, you will not find any modern philosophy that is believing philosophy. Oh of course you will find some philosophers here and there who are believing philosophers, but all philosophy is essentially unbelieving philosophy. It's rationalistic, reason stands above divine revelation. That is essentially the viewpoint that philosophers have of religion, generally false.

Well, Gibbon is right on two of his points, but is he right on the third, “by the magistrates as equally useful?” In other words if we can bring religion to the support of government, then we have something useful for us. Question of whether it's right or wrong doesn't make any difference, the thing is, “is it useful?” And I do not know and I think this is true of our western society as a whole, I do not know of any western ruler who attacks religion, they all would like to have religion. But only religion, religion support them in order that they can use religion for their ends and goals. That's why they quote the Bible. You think L.B.J. was a great Christian? You think he was a great believer, an evangelical believer? Well he wasn't, but he cited the Bible. He cited the Bible over and over again. I don't want to pass judgment on Mr. Reagan, Mr. Johnson said enough anti-Christian things out of generally ignorance to indicate that he was not a Christian, but Mr. Reagan's were also at times somewhat difficult to analyze. But take a look at all of the presidents, take a look at the leaders of the western world, they love to have the support of God and the people quote of God unquote. So Gibbon in analyzing Roman society, analyzed our society pretty well too, all the modes of religious worship are regarded as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false and by the magistrates as equally useful.

Well that's the kind of thing that existed in Isaiah's day. The idea that there is one system of truth that is true, and other things are false, the natural man cannot stand. Well the prophet now Isaiah stands in a situation in which Uzziah, the great king is gone,

Jotham also is gone and a new name appears in Judah's history now appears the name of Ahaz. He has been called the king of no faith. How would you like to be known that way, the king of no faith? He's the man who's ruling now. And I think that we shall come face to face as we think of Ahaz, and as we think of the 7th chapter of Isaiah with a truth that has tremendous application for us today, the need of what one my friends calls the “faith rest technique” in the believer's life. Now we don't have to, of course, line up behind that particular expression, the “faith rest technique” all though it's not a bad expression at all. What he's trying to say and what I think Isaiah is told to tell Ahaz is that the word of God must be applied to our experience. In other words, the things that we believe, the things that we believe also the Scriptures say are things upon which we must rest our lives. And so the idea of resting in the word of God is the “faith rest technique.”

And that's the thing that Isaiah will accuse Ahaz of abandoning. If Ahaz were here tonight and he were here in the status in which he was in Isaiah's day, and if I were allowed to quiz him and if I were to ask him, “Do you believe in Yahweh, the Lord God of Israel?” He would have answered “Yes.” He would have said, “I also am attracted to those Syrian deities, but nevertheless, I do believe in Yahweh, he hasn't been very good to me, and so I have sacrificed to others and I've brought in some idols of the other gods, but after all, all religions are equally true, and so why cannot we put other gods beside Yahweh? We're just that much better off, we've got more gods. Just think we've got the majority, and isn't it better to have a big number of gods? Isn't that better than just one?” I can just see now how he would argue and I can see now, some people sitting in evangelical churches would say, “You know, that kind of makes sense.” As some of you are flinching and frowning, because you see of course, the error of it, but there are lots of people who sit out in a congregation that would find that rather reasonable to have as many gods as possible, after all, if we had the Roman Catholic system and the Lutheran system and the Church of Christ system and Believers Chapel whatever they may believe, if we had all of these things working for us, wouldn't we feel safer? Wouldn't we feel

safer if the Roman Catholic could say of us, “Yes, you meet our standards,” and the Lutherans would say, “Yes, you meet ours,” and the Presbyterians would say, “Yes you meet ours,” and the Church of Christ would say, “You meet ours.” We’d feel a lot stronger wouldn’t we? Or would we? Think about it for a moment.

Well, Isaiah’s in the midst of a war, it’s called the Syro-Ephraimitic war, because Syria and Ephraim are struggling. Now let’s set the scene in seven hundred and thirty-five B.C. Ahaz has come to the throne, in seven hundred and thirty-four, Judah was invaded because they refused to take part in this Pan Syrian alliance against Assyria. In other words, Judah was neutral and Judah would not go along with Israel which had entered into an alliance with Syria in order to defend themselves against Assyria. Now as a result of this, Ahaz was attacked by the Syrians, and he was defeated because well, not because he didn’t go with them, but because of his apostasy. In other words, Ahaz is now being disciplined by the Lord God. If you had again had Ahaz here and you were to say to him, “Ahaz why did those Syrians defeat you?” Well he would have attributed to different things, he would have said, “They’re bigger than we are, they’re stronger than we are and furthermore, I wanted to remain neutral and they wanted me to enter their conspiracy and to protect themselves against Assyria and I wouldn’t do it and so they attacked me and I lost because I didn’t make the right decisions.” No, the reason he lost is because he was not trusting in the Lord God. That’s why he lost. So as a result of this, as a result of the fact that he was defeated, he did the next worst thing that you can do, and that is, he appealed to Assyria for protection against Syria and Ephraim or the northern kingdom. Well, when he appealed to Assyria, he was calling in a mighty power into a struggle that was a small struggle, and the result was that Assyria defeated Israel and defeated Syria.

Now Ahaz of course in on the side of Tiglath-Pileser, at least outwardly, and so he visits Tiglath-Pileser at Damascus after the victory and as a result of it, because now he’s entered into this arrangement with the Assyrians, he finds it necessary also to engage in some support of their gods. And so his unbelief becomes even more idolatrous unbelief

as a result of it. So he's gradually drawn in to further departure from the Lord God. And of course in the final analysis, Assyria's no help at all and Ahaz' distress is caused ultimately by the fact that he did not have faith, and he especially did not have the faith of his father David, for remember, he's on the throne of David. Think of it! A man in the line of the Davidic covenant is a man without faith. His father said, "In my distress, I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God. He heard my voice out of the temple and my cry came to him even into his ears," but David's son doesn't have the faith of David. So this is the situation, and now we're going to turn to Isaiah chapter 7 and I'm going to read just a few verses, and we'll read down through, say verse 9 for the moment.

"And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, (great good kings of Judah) that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, (That's northern Israel) went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, (that is, Ahaz because he's the house of David) saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; (that's the reservoir, they were investigating their water supplies at this time.) And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, (That is the king of Syria and the king of Israel) for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. (That's Pekah who as the king of Northern Israel) Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: (We don't know who the son of Tabeal was, but the name is not a Hebrew name, and so it would appear that it probably was a Syrian man who was going to be put on the throne of the northern kingdom of

Israel. That’s always the case too, when you enter into an idolatrous relationship with the world, soon the world controls the professed believer.) Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand; neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years (That is sixty-five years) shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. (It’s a reference to the fact that Ephraim’s going into captivity in seven hundred and twenty-two B.C.) And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. (That is Pekah) If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”

So in the first verse, we have just a statement by the Prophet Isaiah of the summary facts of the invasion that takes place and then we notice the response of Ahaz to this particular leak. We read in verse 2, “And it was told the house of David.) You know we think that we live in the days of the CIA or the G2 or something like that, but this is Israel’s or Judah’s CIA, notice how it’s put, “And it was told the house of David saying Syria is confederate with Ephraim.) That’s news that comes from the intelligence, and it comes to king, King Ahaz, the king of Judah. And he is told that league between Syria and the northern kingdom is aimed at his throne and the throne of the City of David, think of that. Now of course, if Ahaz had been a true son of David in the sense of not only physically a descendant of King David, but spiritually and descendant of King David, he could have said without any word from the Lord God, “it shall not come to pass.” Because, with our faith rest technique, we can be sure that God is going to deliver us. The Lord Jesus later said, “Come unto me and I will give you rest, take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.” The only safe place for any Christian is in trust in the Lord God.

Well Ahaz hasn’t learned that lesson, or if he ever knew it, he’s forgotten it. And so as a result of this, of course, what do you do? A king, the King David, the king David of his day, well he should do what his father, his father many years before had done, and

that is appeal to the Lord God. “In my distress, I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God, and he heard my voice out of his temple and my cry came before him and even into his ears.” That’s what he should have done; he should have called a prayer meeting. He should have prayed himself he should have gone into his kingly bedroom and knelt down before the Lord God and presented the information that had come to him through his CIA and asked the Lord God to deliver him. That’s what he should have done of course. But instead, he thinks that his strength and his refuge and security lies in proper preparation. Now I don’t deny that anyone should prepare, but preparation is not going to save King Ahaz if that’s all it is, just preparation. And you can see that he’s now in the midst of gathering his men around and he’s out investigating the water supply because of course that will be a key thing if they come down against Judah, where are we going to get our water. And so the word of God came to Isaiah and he said, “Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shearjashub thy son at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field.”

So he’s in the midst of the examination of the water supply in preparation for the siege, apparently more in panic than in prudence. And the reason I say that is because verse 4 when Isaiah is told by the Lord God to go out there to meet him, the Lord says to him in verse 4, “Take heed and be quiet,” this is what you should say to Ahaz, “Take heed and be quiet, fear not, neither be faint hearted, for the two tails of these smoking fire brands, well they’re going to fail.” So it’s evident that they were in a form of panic. They were faint hearted, they had lost their courage, and in fact, in verse 2, we also read that when he heard the information of this alliance between Syria and Ephraim the northern kingdom right on his border, “his heart was moved, and the heart of his people as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.” So you can just see, he’s in panic, he’s just like a tree being blown by the wind, he has no real place where he can take hold and feel secure, because he’s lost his touch with the Lord God. Now I like that statement in verse 4, “Tell him to take heed and be quiet.” It’s as much as if we should

say to a person, “just tell him to quit worrying.” Just tell him to quit worrying, that’s all it is.

Now, one thinks of the experiences of Israel at the Red Sea when the Egyptians were following close upon them and the things that were expressed to them in Exodus chapter 14 and verse 10 we read, “And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold the Egyptians marched after them and they were sore afraid and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord.” And of course we know what happened. As a result of their cry unto the Lord, we read,

“And Moses said unto the people, fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which he will show for you today, for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace.”

And notice the 19th verse of Exodus 14,

“And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them and the pillar of cloud went before their face and stood behind them and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these so that the one came not near the other all night.”

And then when the magnificent deliverance took place, they learned that salvation was of the Lord.

But then there’s another part of the message that is given in verse 9 here, and I wanted to say just a little bit about this because it’s such a magnificent statement. “And this is what you are to tell him, tell him that the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son if ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established.” In the Hebrew text this is sort of an epigrammatic statement it’s a little statement that is

obviously designed by the way it is put together to be remembered. And listen, it goes like this, “*Im lo tha amen nu, kiy lo thay amen nu. Im lo tha amen nu, kiy lo thay amen nu.*” In other words, “If you will not believe, you shall not be brought to the place of trust.” There’s a play on words that you can hardly render in English but some have attempted it, because the word believe can also mean trust and has the sense of having a solid foundation because of trust. This is how some have sought to render these two expressions that sound alike because they came from the same verb, “If in God you do not confide, surely in power you shall not abide.” Or this, “Surely if you will not believe, neither blessing shall ye receive.”

Now if you were a northern Englishman, and you knew some of the idioms of Northern England, you might understand this, “If you have not faith, you cannot have staith.” You can see that staith is built on staying, staying solid, so if you have not faith, you cannot have staith.” In other words, if you don’t believe you cannot possibly be established. If you don’t really trust in the Lord God, you’re going to be like a tree and the leaves blowing in the wind, you’re going to be like a reed, moved back and forth. But with a solid foundation of trust in the Lord God, well you’ll have deliverance, just like Israel had deliverance at the Red Sea. For the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire will come and stand and protect you and keep from you the enemies of the Lord God.

Ahaz however didn’t pay any attention to this, do you know why? ‘Cause Ahaz had already made some decisions along time ago. You know one of my favorite statements? It’s non biblical it’s made by a Jewish man incidentally, so far as I know, Mr. Crystal is not a believing man but he is a very religious man. He says, “When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there’s nothing so mysterious as the obvious.” I love that, I have it on my desk under my glass. When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there is nothing so mysterious as the obvious.” Ahaz carried something in his heart that meant more to him than the promises that Isaiah was giving him from the Lord God, and the thing that meant more to him than the promises of the Lord God was simply

this, trust in Asher, trust in Assyria. He really felt that his deliverance could only come from the worldly power of Assyria. And so when the word of God comes to him, “If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established,” or “If you have not faith, you can not have staith,” it made no impression on him because well, as Mr. Crystal says, “When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there is nothing so mysterious as the obvious.”

Isaiah’s prophecy was so mysterious, and yet it’s so obvious to us that poor King Ahaz couldn’t understand it at all. He thought his solutions lay in diplomacy. Diplomacy, that’s not of course something we have to worry about today, but his solutions lay in diplomacy. Solutions to life to not lie in diplomacy, ever, never in diplomacy. Someone has said, “The higher a man looks, the father he sees.” That’s true, if we can fix our eyes upon the Lord God we can see far right on into the presence of God. But Ahaz couldn’t see any farther then the eyes of the Syrians and the Israelites to the north of him.

Now, God’s not through with Ahaz, because after all, he stands in the line of the Davidic promises and the promises that God gives are going to come to the Davidic line. Ahaz is the son of David sitting on the throne of David at this very moment and so he stands in a very very important place. Therefore we read in verse 10 through verse 17, I read these verses quickly,

“Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. (Well there is interesting statement; we’ll talk about that in a moment.) And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou

abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria.”

Of course we're introduced here to this magnificent prophecy concerning the virgin birth. It's not a mundane tradition as it has been called. It's not a relatively unimportant prophecy as it also has been called by protestant professors in Presbyterian theological seminaries, or a birth myth as it has also been called by religious men, but this a word from the Lord. We read, “Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz saying.” And ultimately this prophecy is the basis of the statement in the Apostles Creed, “conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.” Now what is striking about this is that Ahaz is carrying this secret in his heart of faith in Assyria, trust in Asher. And so the Lord said, Ahaz, I have a further word for you, and my further word is this, since you're finding it so difficult to accept my word, “ask of me a sign, ask a sign either in the depth or in the height above.” In other words, if you doubt that Yahweh the Lord God as we were saying Sunday night a little over a week ago, as they say out in Pigeon English out in the South Seas, this is a message that comes from Big Fellow Master Too Much who bosses both Heaven and ground. That's Yahweh. So this is a message that comes from the Lord God, but he cannot accept it, so he's not sure, so the Lord said, alright, just ask a sign of me. That will indicate who's really speaking to you Ahaz. Ask Thee a sign of the Lord thy God, Yahweh, by God ask it either in the depth, in the sea, some miracle in the seas, or in the heights above. Ask some super natural miracle that will attest that it is the Lord God who's speaking to you. This is the Lord's help for the stubborn, help for the obdurate. And of course it poses Ahaz with a dilemma. So how does he answer it?

Well, he answers it like a good student of theology might answer it. He answers it by an appeal to text, a text from the Bible. It's Deuteronomy 6:16, “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God as ye tempted him in Massah.” So he says, “I will not ask, neither will I

tempt the Lord.” I’m going to appeal to Scripture. In other words, Ahaz said, the Lord’s forgotten one of the rules of hermeneutics; one of the rules of hermeneutics is that you interpret Scripture by Scripture. You use the analogy of faith, that’s the meaning of the expression. That is we look at all of Scripture. And so in effect, he not only now has trust in Asher, but he’s actually accusing the Lord of not understanding what he’s revealed in his word. Amazing, amazing isn’t it? No, I don’t want to ask a sign that would be tempting the Lord. What was it Mr. Crystal said? “When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there’s nothing so mysterious as the obvious.” It’s obvious that the thing that he cannot do is trust the Lord God because he’s already trusting in Asher. Diplomacy, trusting in himself and the solutions that he will offer. In effect, he will not believe without seeing.

But, when the signs are offered, when the Lord God says, “Okay, I give you a sign,” he won’t look. So in effect, he’ll say “I don’t believe anything that I can not see,” and so the Lord said, “Okay, I’ll show you something,” he said, “I won’t look.” That’s human unbelief. Now there are people who tell me that men are not depraved, here is a the son of David, the son of David, great tradition, and here is the Lord God dealing with him, giving him every opportunity, but his heart is so wicked, he cannot respond. Now mind you, he was a religious man, don’t think for one moment that he was the kind of man that would of appeared on the front pages of the paper as being a homo fornicator, murderer, no he’s just a religious idolater. And he’s willing to include all of the gods as well. He’s a religious man, a religious man. Mr. Prier was talking the other night; I like that expression about a secret unbeliever, that’s what he is. He’s not very secret to Isaiah, but he’s a secret unbeliever. He would have been thought to be a believer in Israel. So the Lord says, “If you won’t ask for a sign, I’m going to give you one anyway Ahaz. That’s the meaning of verse 14, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.”

Now, it would be nice if we had all the time necessary to deal with the meaning of verse 14 and if that were so then of course we would devote three, four, five, six hours

there has been that much written about this 14th verse. The great majority of it however, Mr. Crystal would have enjoyed, because, “When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there is nothing so mysterious as the obvious,” and if you do not want to think of this as a supernatural prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is amazing the diversity and variety of human rationalizations seeking to explain a prophecy which seems so plainly to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not refer to evangelicals who differ over the interpretation of this verse, because there are different ways in which this text might refer to the Lord God, the only thing I say is that it must refer to him. Whether this is a direct prophecy of the Son of God or whether it is a typical prophecy, and it may be a typical prophecy, it does refer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me suggest the reasons why it must refer to him. In the first place, the person who is referred to here is called Im man u el. Now you don't have to know any Hebrew, you can look at the margin of your English translation and see that EL is the word for God in his strength, and Im man u is the preposition Im with the pronominal suffix, first person plural, so that Im man u el means simply, with us is God. That's the name, “Thou shall call his name, Emmanuel.” Second, the sign is given not simply to Ahaz, in other words, it's not something limited to Ahaz, but the sign is given to the house of David. Notice what he says, verse 13, “And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David.” Ahaz stands as a representative of the house of David, and the prophecy is made to Abraham's seed, and then specifically concerning the king it is made with the seed of David, with reference to David and his seed. So this is a prophecy made to the house of David. Therefore the Davidic hope is in view, it's not something that pertains only to Ahaz.

Then thirdly, the Hebrew term for virgin is the word almah, here it has an article, it's ha almah, in other words, this is the virgin, it can hardly be anything then a special virgin is in mind. But almah occurs oh, half a dozen times, I did not write down the times in this particular lecture, I have other lectures on this topic, in which I discuss the use in the Old Testament and the New Testament and list them there, but it occurs about a half a

dozen times in the Old Testament and in every case in which it occurs in the Old Testament, it either means a virgin or can mean a virgin. In other words, there are some times in certain contexts in which it's hard to tell whether the reference is to a virgin or simply to a young maiden, but so far as those texts are concerned, they can mean virgin, it never refers to a married woman. It does refer essentially to a young woman of marriageable age. And at times she is specifically said to be a virgin. In Genesis chapter 24 is the first reference of it, a reference to Rebekah there. She was of course clearly a virgin. So here it's the virgin shall conceive.

Now mind you he has said, “Ask a sign, a miraculous sign in the deep or in the heavens above.” Now Ahaz, I'm going to give you a sign, we would naturally expect would we not that it would be something supernatural. And the virgin giving birth to a child is supernatural, not in our society of course, but even in our society, it's only because of some skills that physicians may have learned now and even then it's not that individual's child. So this is something supernatural, “The virgin shall conceive.” I wish it were possible I said to deal with this a lot more but of course, the Old Testament Greek version of Isaiah was published before the time of the New Testament and cannot therefore be said to be something that was devised in order to harmonize with later Christian interpretation. The term that is used which is also cited in the New Testament later in Matthew chapter 1 is the term parthenos which means a virgin. So it was understood that way, and in fact, the Hebrews understood it as virgin, though they applied it to someone else because of course they did not believe in the supernatural virgin birth of the coming Son of God.

The context suggests a supernatural thing as we've been stressing and that I think is confirmed too by reading verses 8 and 9 of chapter 8, so turn there for just a moment and let's read verse 8 of chapter 8. The prophet is writing,

“Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: (He’s describing in figurative fashion how Assyria’s going to come and is going to come into the land and is going to be victorious in the land right up to the city of Jerusalem.) And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Emmanuel.”

So this Emmanuel is an individual who owns the land, who possesses the land. He’s the Big Fellow Master Too Much who bosses both Heaven and ground. And therefore, Judah belongs to him as well. And I suggest to you also that the sweep and flow of these chapters, 7 through 12, called by even somewhat liberal students of the Old Testament “The Book of Emmanuel,” supports the interpretation in which this text is referred to the Lord Jesus Christ. For in verse 14 of chapter 7 we have the prophecy of the virgin birth, and then in chapter 9 and verse 6 and verse 7 we read about this child,

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order and establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

And so as the flow of these chapters continues and as more details are given, you can see how the virgin born one is now the Son and also called the everlasting Father. And finally in chapter 11 verse 1 we read,

“And the shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.”

We need not read any further, this is the magnificent prophecy of the coming of reign of the root and offspring of David. So the flow of these chapters from 7 through 12, in the Book of Emmanuel supports a reference in verse 14 of chapter 7 to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Robert Dick Wilson was one of the finest of the professors at Princeton Theological Seminary in the days when Princeton Theological Seminary was a tower of conservative theology in this country, in the days of Warfield and others like Warfield. He pointed out a long time ago that the real difficulty lies in the disbelief in predictive prophecy, and the mighty power of God, or in the desire to discredit the divine sonship of the Savior. And he concludes a discussion; he was one of the greatest of the Old Testament scholars in his day, he said, “In the third sura of the Koran, Mohammad represents Mary as saying to the angel, Lord how can I have a son when man has not yet touched me? And the angel said, thus God creates what he pleaseth. When he decrees a matter he only says be and it is.” And then Dr. Wilson says, “Mohammad was a better theist than many who profess to be followers of Christ today. It’s not impossible for God through the Virgin Mary to so work through the Holy Spirit that we have the God man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, the remainder of the chapter is of course a prophecy of the land’s devastation, read verse 16 and 17 of chapter 7,

“For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. The LORD shall bring upon thee, and

upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria.”

So, Ahaz, by his unbelief has disestablished the kingdom and furthermore, he has mortgaged the hope of Israel. Unbelief is a perilous danger and can be nothing more than chaos in the family of God and in the people of God, and may I also say, in our personal lives too. That really is one of the fundamental issues of life. One could apply this to so many things, but I'm sure that you understand them as well as I. The last of the chapter is simply a treatment of Ahaz and the Assyrian, further expansion of verse 17 and the catastrophe of unbelief.

Well, one might say, “Why is the virgin birth so important? Why do we make so much over it?” The standard statement of semi-liberal or semi-conservative scholarship today is, “The virgin birth doctrine may or may not be true, but it's unimportant.” Usually that goes with a general sense of it's probably not true. But I would just suggest to you this, that there can be no king ruling on David's throne apart from this virgin birth. Later on in the Old Testament it is said with reference to the line of David that no king because of the disobedience of a later king, that no one from that king's seed shall ever sit upon the throne of David. In other words, God has by his own prophecies, brought about a seeming contradiction, there will be a king of David, he will sit on the throne, but then he says no one from this king and he's a legitimate king of David, King David, no one of his seed shall ever sit upon the throne.

Now we know of course how God solved his own difficulty if we may call it that, it's not a difficulty to him but it's a difficulty to us, he solved it very simply. He had the Lord Jesus Christ of the seed of David, but he couldn't sit on that throne if he was really Joseph's son, because Joseph came under that curse. But Joseph had legal title, and so the one who sits on the throne must be Joseph's son legally, but he cannot be his physical son. And so by virtue of the virgin birth the Lord Jesus Christ is legally the heir to the

throne but since he does not partake of Joseph’s nature but rather has his Davidic nature on the human level through Mary, also seed of David. He is both seed of David and legally able to sit on the throne. Not only that, even more fundamentally, he could not be a divine Savior if he were not virgin born. Because if he participates in human nature in the natural sense alone, then he inherits the curse too, and therefore he cannot be a substitute for others, for he needs someone to die for him. And by for this ...

[AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY]